

ADVENTURES IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

East of I was in America, along with a crowd of Indians, on a prospecting tour, and had got as far west as Colorado. After seeing something of the kind of life out there, we left Denver City on the 18th July with the intention of crossing the Rocky Mountains to see some silver mines of which we heard a good deal.

We started at an early hour in the morning, with four mules and two attendants, and by noon had reached a height of nearly seven thousand feet, without anything remarkable having occurred. The scenery was characteristic of the elevated and arid districts through which we travelled. Far above us the mountains rose into sharp peaks covered with snow, while down in the great canyons or gorges we could trace sometimes a little stream, cheered by a scanty vegetation; at other times only a dry bed of debris from the sides of the mountains. The place where we now found ourselves was a sufficiently startling one. On our right the mountain rose high above us, now in the form of a precipitous cliff that overhung us and seemed to threaten our destruction, and now in the shape of a rugged slope, scarcely less steep than the precipice itself, covered with great boulders and projecting rocks, with here and there a shrub or aunted tree anchored in crevices. The path along which we moved was but a few feet in width, and beneath us the precipitous gorge hundreds of feet below. I durst not look down—the very sight made my brain swim.

The mules, with the caution peculiar to those useful animals, picked their way along with the utmost care, and I was just beginning to regain a little of the confidence which I had lost on entering this terrible dell, when we heard above us among the rocks the sharp crack of a rifle, followed by a sudden shriek and a noise as of thunder. We looked up and saw that a flock of birds, but not a single one, was flying over our heads. But as the shot cleared away we could see that the hunter had happily saved himself by clinging to a shrub, and was now making successful efforts to gain a kind of rocky plateau, which he no sooner reached than he disappeared, and we passed on our journey, a good deal startled by what had occurred.

But judge of our amazement and vexation when on proceeding forward we found that the rolling mass of rock in its descent had struck the footpath on which we travelled, and carried a piece of it quite away, leaving a gap of some eight feet, above which the rock rose sheer like a wall, and beneath was one horrible precipice to which no mortal foot could cling. Here, indeed, was a fix. We could not possibly climb or scramble across, for the little strip of path that was left was so broken and shattered, that we durst not venture upon it. We had no planks or ropes therefore our only way was to jump. Now, a jump of eight feet is not much to speak of in a gymnasium; but when you have to clear a chasm, where to miss your footing or to lose your balance means almost certain death, it becomes a very different thing. Had time permitted, we would have turned back; but our mission was urgent, and we resolved to proceed, by first throwing our bags across the gap, then leaping after them ourselves, sending one of the men back with our mules. My cousin first essayed the gap, and I, scarcely felt equal to it. Not that I was of a timid nature, or a bad jumper; but the events of the last few minutes had somewhat unnerved me, and the shriek of the terrible hunter, the thunder of the descending rock, and the far-away deadly boom of its landing in the chasm below, still hung about my ears with a confused and ominous buzz. I felt half disposed to stop the white feather then and there, and decline the perilous venture. But my courage was partially restored, as I saw my cousin safely landed; and I leapt. My feet touched the opposite ledge, but I had lost my balance. My cousin made a dash to save me, and, missing his hold, in another moment I had fallen back into the gap below.

I did not at first know what happened. It was all so swift and terrible. I only remember giving myself up for lost, and anticipating my being dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Yet such was not my fate. About twenty feet down I struck slightly upon a shelving rock, which diverted my course from the perpendicular, and miraculously threw me sideways in a sloping position into an open cleft or fissure of the rock, which caught and kept me wedged like a wedge, hanging head downward over the deadly gorge. It was an awful position to be in, but I did not at first realize it. I neither knew where nor how I was. At length, in answer to the repeated cries of my cousin above, I wakened up to a kind of consciousness, and clutched at some shrub. Under the help of the position of less danger, for the sight of the open chasm below had a lessening effect on me, and I felt that unless I could strengthen my hold by means of the shrubs around me, I might at any moment slip out of the cleft and be buried into the abyss.

My cousin saw there was not a moment to be lost. A little before we entered the dell, we had passed a large party of travelling merchants, and so he detached one of the men back to overtake them and borrow a rope. While this was taking place I hung in a state of intolerable agony. I was afraid to look up and still more afraid to look down. I could only clutch at the shrubs which at every moment threatened to give way, and bury my face between my clenched hands as to about the horrible sense of present danger. It passed some hours before the man returned, though he could not have been away more than fifteen minutes. He brought with him about twenty yards of rope, which was let down to me and which I caught firm hold of, with the intention of trying myself to it. But unfortunately for me in this emergency, I failed—the excitement and suspense proved too much for my overtaxed energies. This was a new difficulty to those who endeavored to rescue me. My cousin had to jump back to the other side of the gap; and this, with the help of the rope, he successfully accomplished. When his first idea was frustrated by means of the rope to my rescue; but one of the attendants would not allow him, on account of his weight, and himself volunteered to make the attempt. He was a light made, agile man, and throwing a loop around his shoulders, he was able with the help of

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